

## Human Services - Collaboration in Delivering Human Services in NSW

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**Functional Sub group** Corporate Administration - Governance  
Clinical/ Patient Services - Governance and Service Delivery

**Summary** This Policy Directive describes the requirements for any health organisation entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Agreement with another human service agency. Also included are the collaboration tools that were developed by the Human Services CEOs Forum and the NSW Premier's Department as a guide for all human service workers. The tools provide principles and guidelines to help staff in human service agencies work together to deliver results for people that need support from more than one agency.

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**Applies to** Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Public Health System Support Division, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Divisions of General Practice, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Dept of Health, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

**Audience** All staff

**Distributed to** Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Divisions of General Practice, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

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### Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

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## COLLABORATION IN DELIVERING HUMAN SERVICES IN NSW

This document has been developed by the Human Services CEOs Forum and the NSW Premier's Department for all human service workers. The NSW Department of Health has included specific requirements (item 1) in respect to the approval and reporting of any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or written Agreement between agencies.

*This document and its requirements do not apply to Grants, including those to Non-Government Organisations or Service Level Agreements.*

The provide principles and guidelines are provided to help staff in human service agencies work together to deliver results for people that need support from more than one agency.

In developing these tools Human Services CEOs recognise that there are extremely complex issues in human service delivery that no single agency can be responsible for. Delivering effective and joined up services for clients – particularly those with complex needs - require agencies to work together, respecting each others priorities, and understanding each others roles and responsibilities.

Sometimes it will be necessary for agencies to define their roles and responsibility and the way in which they will work together to meet the needs of certain clients. In those cases agencies may decide that a formal agreement is needed. A checklist for establishing a successful interagency agreement has also been developed.

### Definitions

- “Human Services” means provision of services to members of the community as either patients or clients.
- “Inter-Agency” means State, Commonwealth, Local Government, non-government or private sector agencies.
- “Health organisation” in this document the term refers to the NSW Department of Health, Area Health Services, Statutory Health Organisations, Ambulance Service of NSW and Health System Support Division.

### 1. Mandatory Requirements

Listed hereunder are actions that require compliance if any health organisation enters into a MOU/Agreement.

- a) Organisations are to have formal delegations of authority as to who can approve a Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement.
- b) MOU/Agreements are to specify as a minimum:
  - all participants, roles and responsibilities;

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- key stakeholders to the MOU/Agreement and how they will be involved in development, implementation or review;
  - a clear purpose, general approach and intended results arising from the MOU/Agreement;
  - duration of the MOU/Agreement.
- c) Health organisations are to provide to the Department's Corporate Governance and Risk Management Branch:
- a copy of any existing MOU/Agreement;
  - a copy of any subsequent new MOU/Agreement;
  - details of the cessation of any MOU/Agreement.

## **2. Principles and Practices for Successful Interagency Collaboration**

### **Collaboration as core business**

- Collaboration is not an “add on” activity - it is integral to the way we deliver our core business, improving service quality, reducing risks and costs, and delivering better results for clients and communities.

### **A joint-agency working culture**

- Collaboration relies on a culture that values innovative solutions to complex client and community needs, and respects the differing perspectives of other agencies and professionals.

### **Collaborative relationships**

- Collaboration is based on relationships between people, it takes time and effort to develop trust, a common language and a common understanding of each agency's needs.

### **Delegation and Accountability**

- Collaboration requires service providers to have the authority and motivation to work together and to be jointly responsible for the results of that work.

### **Skills for working across boundaries**

- Collaboration relies on staff and managers having the skills and experience to work and communicate across agencies, professions, and program and regional boundaries.

### **Systems for cross-agency working**

- Collaboration needs effective policy, planning, administration and/or service delivery systems that support multiple-agency initiatives.

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## **The local context**

- A “test” of collaboration is whether “front line” staff are empowered and resourced to work flexibly across agency boundaries so services are customised to meet client and community needs.

## **Investing in collaboration**

- Collaboration requires an investment of time and effort to provide better value services and public sector-wide efficiencies.

## **Solutions Focus**

- Collaboration requires frank and respectful analysis of many different perspectives and priorities so that creative, innovative and transparent solutions can be developed to resolve mutual problems.

## **Involving stakeholders**

- Collaboration is enhanced by the involvement of service providers, clients and other stakeholders in policy, planning, service delivery and evaluation.

## **Monitoring and review**

Collaboration is a process of continuous improvement between agencies and is based on relevant data to monitor and regular evaluate results.

## **3. Guidelines for making collaboration happen**

### **When to Collaborate?**

- When clients or communities have complex needs that cannot be met by a single policy, program or service.
- When other agencies (e.g. State, Commonwealth, Local Government, non-government or private sector agencies) affect your services or clients; or your policies, programs or services have a “flow-on” effect to others.

### **Why Collaborate?**

- To develop or implement a shared strategy that involves other agencies to better meet client/community needs
- To develop or implement more effective solutions to solve issues or problems that involve other government or non-government agencies.
- To develop more innovative or effective or efficient ways to provide services and use available resources.

## **First Steps**

- Establish relationships with relevant contacts in other agencies who you can talk with about the issue.
- Identify cross-agency forums where the issue can be raised.
- Develop a mutual understanding of the priorities and limits for each agency.
- Agree on a shared language to define and communicate the issue.
- Identify data to demonstrate the importance and scope of the issue.

## **Developing shared solutions**

- Identify options to meet the needs of the client or community.
- Assess each option against the intended results for clients, the implications for agencies, and the fit to government or cluster objectives.
- Analyse the risks and benefits of each option.
- Agree on a preferred approach.
- Test this approach against current practice, policies and procedures and with senior staff in the organisation if there is a deviation from usual practice proposed.

## **Practical considerations**

- Consider how to involve clients and other stakeholders.
- Ensure all decision makers have appropriate levels of authority.
- Determine whether a written inter-agency agreement is required (4), to:
  - Clarify the purpose of the initiative
  - Clarify the roles and responsibilities of agencies
  - Specify resource commitments
  - Outline governance arrangements, review & conflict resolution processes etc.
  - Specify a small number of performance measures to show the results of collaboration
- Identify shared training to support the approach.

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- Address system changes to support the initiative eg. planning, policy, IT, funding, reporting.
- Establish a project or case plan with milestones, timelines, and expected results.
- Develop a communication strategy to involve both internal and external stakeholders.

## Reporting

- Regularly monitor results of collaboration for clients and communities.
- Use your results to learn, improve and modify your approach, and to celebrate success.

## 4. Checklist for Interagency Agreements

This checklist can be used when it is decided that a written agreement between agencies is required to bring about improved collaboration. The decision to enter into a written agreement must be made under the relevant delegations for the agency.

### Status of the Agreement

- Ensure the Agreement specifies that it is “a statement of intent” only and therefore the agency:
  - is willing and able to use best endeavours to implement the agreement and
  - will act in a fair and equitable manner toward the other parties and in the public interest
- If an agency wishes to use the Agreement to establish a legally binding contract consult your Legal Branch.
- Interagency agreements will be about how to improve collaboration on programs and services, and set out when and how interagency collaboration will occur. The results and benefits arising from the delivery of that program or those services is a separate consideration.

### Objectives

- A clear purpose, general approach and intended results arising from the Agreement.

### Governance and Accountability

- All participants to the Agreement, their roles and responsibilities and, where appropriate, the roles and responsibilities of different parts of an

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agency (e.g. head, regional, local offices). The role(s) of any Commonwealth or local government, or non-government agencies also need to be clearly stated.

- Key stakeholders to the Agreement and how they will be involved in development, implementation or review.
- Arrangements for reporting on the results of the collaboration e.g. who to, how often and what types of data will be provided.

## **Resources**

- Staffing, financial and other resources (e.g. planning, premises and technology) to be applied in implementing and monitoring/reviewing the Agreement.

## **Implementation and reporting**

- Activities to be undertaken at all levels of an agency to implement the Agreement e.g. head office, regional offices and local/service delivery offices.
- Responsibility for administration of the Agreement (e.g. organising meetings, reporting to relevant accountable officers).
- Responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Agreement; performance indicators to be used to determine how effective the collaboration is.

## **Review**

- How the Agreement will be reviewed (including criteria for assessing its effectiveness), when, by whom and to whom the results of the review will be reported.
- Any monitoring and evaluation of agreements should be dependent on the objectives of the Agreement.

Robyn Kruk  
**Director-General**